

# **Comparative analysis of policy networks in Western Europe**

by

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**Abstract**

In this paper we seek to understand the impact of the macro-political context on power configurations within policy subsystems. For this purpose we systematically compare policy networks in three major policy subsystems and seven Western European countries (and the EU) on the basis of a typology for the power configurations within policy subsystems. We link the European, domestic and policy-specific context to our typology of policy networks. To test the hypotheses we conduct empirical network and reputational analysis of 345 interviews with key policy makers. The results point not only to the importance of the EU context, but also to the complex interplay of domestic and policy-specific contexts for understanding domestic power configurations. Domestic power configurations vary not only from country to country, but also within the countries depending on the policy domain.

Keywords: network analysis, policy networks, power structures, European integration, agriculture, immigration

## **Models for the power structure in a policy subsystem**

Policy-making takes place in policy domain-specific subsystems, which operate more or less independently of one another in a parallel fashion. Such policy subsystems consist of a large number of actors dealing with specific policy issues. Political processes in these subsystems are not controlled by state actors alone; rather, they are characterized by interactions of public and private actors. The concern with a larger variety of actors and their interactions has given prominence to the concept of policy networks. The term policy network – as we use it here – is to be understood as a generic label that embraces different forms of relations between state actors and private actors (Jordan and Schubert 1992: 10; Rhodes and Marsh 1992: 186).

We build on the various typologies that have been developed in order to capture the different forms of state-private actor relations within policy networks. The first dimension that we use for our typology of power structures is often referred to in the literature as being central: the *distribution of power* (see Rhodes and Marsh 1992, Atkinson and Coleman 1989, van Waarden 1992). This dimension is above all concerned with whether power is concentrated in the hands of one dominant actor or coalition of actors or whether it is shared between actors or coalitions of actors. In addition, this dimension also includes the attribution of power to specific types of actors. We shall distinguish between state actors and three types of actors in the system of interest intermediation: political parties, interest groups and non-governmental organizations/social movement organizations (NGOs or SMOs). In other words, we extend the focus of the corporatism-pluralism literature beyond interest groups and analyze a larger range of participants in the policy-making process.

When concerned with the types of political actors involved in policy networks, the literature attracts our attention to the fact that we are likely to encounter coalitions rather than single actors. The advocacy coalition approach (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999) provides us with the basic insight into the role of actor coalitions for the dynamics of the policy process: at a

given moment, in a given subsystem we are likely to find a limited number of coalitions with varying political influence on the political processes within the subsystem. Domain-specific policy-making is typically dominated by one of these coalitions that exerts, what Baumgartner and Jones (1993) have termed, a “policy monopoly”. Coalitions can be composed of one type of actors only (homogenous), or they can incorporate different actor types (heterogeneous). Including this aspect into the first dimension – distribution of power – allows for a differentiated account of the power structure within the political process.

However, power structures cannot solely be accounted for by this single dimension. We also need to take into account the *dominant type of interaction* between actors or coalitions as a second basic dimension. The strength of the policy network concept – in our understanding – is its *relational* perspective on the policy process. We suggest that the actors’ interactions reveal an essential part of the power structure within a policy subsystem as “power is not a property or attribute that is inherent in an individual or group in the way that an electrical battery stores so many volts of energy. Rather, power is an aspect of the actual or potential interactions between two or more social actors” (Knoke 1990: 1). Depending on the degree of cooperation among actors and actor coalitions, we distinguish between three forms: (predominance of) conflict/competition, (predominance of) bargaining and (predominance of) cooperation. Bargaining constitutes an intermediary or ambivalent type of interaction that is characterized by both conflict/competition and cooperation.

By combining the two dimensions describing the power structure in a network – the distribution of power and the type of interaction – six policy configurations can be derived (see Figure 1). The first configuration is the one we call “*challenge*” (of the dominant coalition by minority coalitions), a situation where power is fragmented and the predominant type of interaction is conflictual. If power is concentrated and the mode of interaction is conflictual, we face a situation of “*dominance*”. *Bargaining* is either *symmetric* or

*asymmetric* – depending on the degree of concentration of power. If the interaction is characterized by *cooperation*, we argue that the distribution of power loses importance: such cases are presumably allowing for influence on the policy-process by dominant coalitions and challengers alike.

< Figure 1 about here >

### **The political context**

We focus on the contextual determinants of the policy-specific power structures. Looking at three selected policy domains in seven Western European countries – Germany (D), France (F), Italy (I), the Netherlands (NL), Spain (E), Switzerland (CH) and the United Kingdom (UK) – and at the supranational level of the European Union (EU), we describe and analyze power structures as a function of the macro-political context in the specific policy subsystems. Three basic aspects of the macro-political context are to be distinguished: the European context, the national context and the policy-specific context.

### ***The European context***

Following the work of several influential political scientists (Jachtenfuchs and Kohler-Koch 2003, Hooghe and Marks 2001, Cowles and Risse 2001), we assume that European integration over the past decades has led to the creation of a polity of an unprecedented kind – a system of multilevel governance that encompasses a variety of authoritative institutions at supranational, national, and sub-national levels of decision-making. According to this point of view, the EU constitutes a distinct structure of governance, which is not structurally isomorphic to any of the individual EU member states, not even the big three. The development of this Euro-polity has gone hand in hand with a politicization and a widening

scope of the decision-making at the EU-level. From the point of view of national political actors, the emergence of the new supranational layer of decision-making at the EU-level implies a transformation of their macro-political context. The EU level adds new opportunities and constraints, which modify the distribution of power at the domestic level.

The impact of this new layer of decision-making on the domain-specific distribution of power depends most obviously on whether or not a country is member of the EU. Accordingly, we expect the distribution of power and the pattern of interactions to be more affected in EU-member states than in countries such as Switzerland, which are not part of the EU. In addition, for EU-member states, the impact on the domain-specific distribution of power depends on the degree to which decision-making competences have shifted to the EU level. The extent of such a shift, in turn, is a function of the policy domain. It is the policies of the so-called first pillar – the four freedoms of movement, agriculture, competition, trade and, recently, also visa and asylum policies – and constitutional issues concerning the construction of the EU-polity, where decision-making at the EU-level has become most salient. In our study, three policy domains will be analyzed, all belonging to the high salience category:

- *European integration*, i.e. the institutional construction of the EU (in particular the question of the Convention; for the non-member state Switzerland, we consider the negotiations of the Bilateral Agreements with the EU)
- *Agricultural policy* (in particular agricultural subsidies), i.e. one of the key policy domains of the first pillar, where the EU has crucial policy responsibilities
- *Immigration policy* (in particular questions concerning political refugees), i.e. a domain which, based on the Amsterdam Treaty, has equally become part of the first pillar.

The very high degree of Europeanization of the constitutional issues of the EU is obvious as is the high degree of Europeanization of agricultural policy, which absorbs, since the turn of the millennium, on average 45 per cent of the EU's annual budget (European Commission 2005). In immigration policy and justice and home affairs (JHA) more generally, however, the shift of decision-making competences to the supranational level is still less pronounced (Lavenex 2001: 854). The "Community method" of integration is replaced by a new mode of policy-making in the domains belonging to JHA, which has been called "intensive transgovernmentalism". This mode depends mainly on interactions between the relevant national policy-makers and implies relatively little involvement by the EU institutions (Wallace 2000a: 33).

### ***The domestic context***

The core of the domestic political opportunity structures is made up of the *formal political institutions* which regulate the distribution of power. Lijphart's (1999) typology of democracies allows us to distinguish between country-specific institutional structures according to the extent to which they concentrate power. Lijphart makes a distinction between "*consensus democracies*" – i.e. countries which share power between several institutions and between different political forces within each institution – and "*majoritarian democracies*" – i.e. democracies which concentrate power in the hands of a few political institutions and actors. Based on Lijphart's assessment of the power sharing, we can roughly divide our seven countries into three groups – the group of the consensual-federal democracies (CH, D), the group of the more majoritarian-unitarian democracies (F, UK) and the intermediary types (either consensual-unitarian (I, NL) or majoritarian-federal (E)). As far as Italy is concerned, its recent change in the electoral system brought it closer to the majoritarian model, but we should acknowledge that its institutional structure in many ways still contributes to the

sharing of power (Hine 1993: 2). As for the EU, its institutions are, according to Lijphart (1999: 42-47), of the consensual-federal type.

Organizational sociologists have long insisted on the difference between the formal and the informal side of structure. Analogously, we should take into account the distinction between the formal institutional structure and the informal ways in which it is typically applied.

Scharpf (1984: 260) has used the concept of the “dominant strategy” to characterize the informal premises of procedure, the shared implicit or explicit understandings which emerge from the policy process, and which guide the actions of the authorities. We can distinguish here between political contexts according to the extent to which they induce political actors to *cooperate informally*. Consensus democracies provide strong incentives for cooperation among political actors, while majoritarian democracies go together with a more competitive or unilateral style of policy-making. Thus, cooperation is expected to be rather low in France and Italy, while it is expected to be rather high in Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands. Spain is expected to be a mixed case in this respect as well: on the one hand, it has a long history of authoritarian regimes. On the other hand, its transition to democracy has been exemplary with regard to the cooperation among the elites and the decentralization of power (Linz and Stepan 1995; Perez-Diaz 1993).

However, there is not necessarily a one-to-one relationship between the two aspects of the political opportunity structure. Thus, the British style of policy-making is known to “emphasize consensus and a desire to avoid the imposition of solutions on sections of society” (Jordan and Richardson 1982: 81); in Britain, the concentrated power is used with a certain informal restraint (Punnett 1989: 208). By contrast, the Italian style of policy-making appears to be more unilateral, although the country has institutions which are rather of the more consensus-democratic type. As far as the EU is concerned, if it does grant formal political access, the informal hurdles which non-governmental actors must pass in order to be



effectively taken into consideration are quite important, which is why we would consider it to be less cooperative than it appears at first sight (Marks and McAdam 1999; Streeck and Schmitter 1991). Combining the two dimensions, we get the typology of country-specific opportunity structures that is represented in Figure 2.

< Figure 2 about here >

### ***The policy-specific context***

The *pattern of interaction* in a policy domain in particular, additionally depends on the *phase of policy-making* within the domain. Following Baumgartner und Jones (1993, 2002) we assume that the policy monopoly of the dominant coalition remains intact as long as it is not destabilized by exogenous shocks and/or the mobilization of competing coalitions. Linking policy phase to the type of interaction, we expect interaction patterns to be rather cooperative in stable phases of policy-making, while they are expected to become *more conflictual* in a critical phase. In other words, power structures are more conflictual, when the policy process in a given subsystem attracts the attention of the wider public and of macro-politics than when it is in a routinized state.

The constitutional issues of European integration have been in a critical phase at the time of our study. The Convention for an EU constitution represents one of those intermittent grand bargains or critical phases that establish the basic features of the EU's institutional design and that are so dear to intergovernmentalists (e.g. Moravcsik 1993). The same applies to the negotiations for Bilateral Agreements between Switzerland and the EU, as far as Switzerland is concerned. By contrast, agricultural policy was in a rather steady state during the period of our study with only routinely lingering international pressure for change – although Commissioner Fischler used the 2002/2003 midterm review of the Agenda 2000 as an

occasion to introduce further reform. Visa and asylum policy, finally, has become a highly politicized issue in domestic politics in most Western European countries. It has given rise to mobilizations by the radical-populist right in domestic politics. Accordingly, compared to agricultural policy, the domains of European integration and of asylum policies were high on the public agenda and of macro-politics during the period studied. This means that we expect more overall conflict in these two domains than in agricultural policy.

In addition, we expect variation with regard to the pattern of conflict in a given policy domain between the countries. For lack of space, we cannot formulate hypotheses for every single country; we can only present a few hypotheses to illustrate our approach. For the non EU-member Switzerland, the relationship between the country and the European and global context has become the key political cleavage over the past decade (Kriesi et al. 2005). This is why we expect a high degree of conflict in all three Swiss policy domains, but especially with regard to EU-integration and immigration. Although the degree of overall cooperation is high in Swiss politics, this does not preclude a high degree of conflict in some policy-domains. Or, more generally: there is also conflict in consensus democracies. The essential point is that, in consensus democracies, conflicts are managed in a less confrontational way than in majoritarian democracies and are therefore likely to be “hidden” in – what we call in our typology – bargaining situations. For the EU-member states, the question of the Constitution has always been most contested in the UK, while it has been rather uncontested in the European South (Italy and Spain among our countries). Asylum policy, by contrast, has become more contested in the European South, while it has until very recently been kept out of domestic politics in the North-West of Europe (the Netherlands and the UK among our countries). Accordingly, we expect the Southern European countries to have relatively high levels of conflict in immigration, but not in EU-integration, while we expect the reverse for the UK and, as far as immigration is concerned, for the Netherlands.

## **Data and operationalizations**

The analysis is based on 345 semi-structured interviews with four categories of actors (state actors, political parties, interest associations, and SMO-NGOs) present in three policy fields (immigration, agriculture and European integration) in seven countries (CH, F, D, I, NL, E, UK) and the EU level. The most important person in charge of designing an organization's mobilization and communication strategy was interviewed. The interviews were conducted face to face or by phone by members of the different country teams of the EUROPUB.COM project in 2003. The interviews are distributed as follows over the countries in question: CH: 48 (13.9 %); D: 47 (13.6 %); E: 43 (12.5 %); F: 32 (9.3 %); I 49 (14.2 %); NL: 45 (13.0 %); UK: 42 (12.2 %); EU: 39 (11.3 %).

For each policy field, we intended to select the four most important organizations in each one of our four categories of actors. Note that this selection procedure does not necessarily include all the most important actors in a policy domain. It could be that all the SMO-NGOs were marginal in one of the policy domains, while several additional state actors played a key role. While neglecting some key actors, this procedure has the advantage of providing us with information about all four types of actors.

In order to analyze the two dimensions describing power structures – the distribution of power (including the composition of the coalitions) and the type of interaction – we draw on reputational and network indicators. The *power of an actor* is operationalized by reputational measures. These are based on a set of questions referring to a list of 40 organizations, which included all the actors whom the country teams considered to be the most important ones in the respective domains based on media content analyses performed earlier in the project. The 16 interviewed organizations constitute a subset of the 40 organizations on the list. The interviewees were first asked to name all organizations on this list, which, from their point of view, have been particularly influential in the respective policy domain over the past five

years. Next, they were asked to name the three most influential organizations, and, finally, the most influential one. For each actor on the list of 40, an overall indicator is calculated out of these three questions that shows the power that is attributed to the respective actor. For each policy domain in each country, the maximum value of this indicator has been set to 1 and the remaining values have been adjusted accordingly.

The questions on networks are very much inspired by earlier work about political elites and their involvement in specific policy areas (e.g. Knoke et al. 1996; Kriesi 1980; Kriesi and Jegen 2001; Laumann and Pappi 1976; Laumann and Knoke 1987). The respondents were again presented with the list of 40 organizations. For each actor on the list, they were then asked specific questions about three types of interactions – alliances, oppositional relationships and targeting. In particular they were asked whether they had

- “closely collaborated” with this actor over the last five years (*cooperation*),
- “some major disagreements” with this actor over the last five years (*conflict*),
- “tried to influence” him over the last five years (*targeting*).

Note that we could obtain complete information for systematic network analyses only for the organizations included in the study that completed this part of the questionnaire. In other words, we could get at best a complete network of 16 organizations per issue domain and country. In order to determine the dominant *type of interaction* and the *basic coalitions* within a policy-subsystem we use *network-analytical procedures* to analyze the three matrices of ties between these organizations.<sup>1</sup> The type of interaction is determined by the relative density of the different types of ties. To study coalition structures we draw on block-model analysis. A block model consists of two elements (Wasserman and Faust 1999: 395). First, it divides actors in the network into discrete subsets called “positions” or “blocks”. Actors are placed within the same block if they have similar relations to all the other actors and are, therefore, regarded as “structurally equivalent”. For each policy-domain in each

country four blocks have been identified. Second, for each network, a “block model” represents the pattern of ties between and within these blocks. The presence or absence of a tie between two blocks depends on the density of the ties among the actors composing them. We regard a relation as present, if the density of ties is above .1. The advantage of block model analysis is that we can analyze each type of interaction separately or all three at one and the same time. The resulting pattern of ties between and within blocks can be represented by a complex “image matrix” that distinguishes between cooperative ties, bargaining ties, conflict ties and no ties at all.

It must be kept in mind that, for each country-specific policy domain, only a limited number of actors has been interviewed. In order to check whether these actors include the most powerful ones at the domestic level, we compared their power with that of the remaining actors on the list of 40. The results of the respective comparisons were quite satisfactory. With some exceptions – mainly, but not exclusively, from France and Italy –, the actors we have interviewed include the most important ones overall, and the most important ones in each category. Knowing about the possible shortcomings of our selection procedure and the limited number of interviews, these results give us confidence in the quality of our data. Nevertheless, we should mention that, in three cases, the respondents were less than willing to provide us with information on their network ties (agriculture in France, and EU integration in Italy and the EU). Therefore, the corresponding three networks are not analyzed in detail.

## Results

### *The impact of the EU context on power structures*

The first aspect of the configuration of power in a given policy domain concerns the *relative power of the domestic vs. European or other supranational actors* (e.g. WTO). This aspect can be tested based on the reputational power of all 40 actors in each one of the three policy domains in our countries. First of all, we observe that membership in the EU is, indeed, a crucial factor in determining the distribution of power in a given policy domain: in Switzerland, power remains almost exclusively in the hands of domestic actors – at least in the perception of the members of the Swiss political elites – while this is no longer the case for EU-members. For the latter states, the Europeanization of power varies according to the policy domain. This becomes quite clear, when we compare the total amount of reputational power of the European and other supranational actors on the list of 40 with the corresponding total amount of power of the domestic actors on the same list. *Figure 3* provides the ratios of the total power of supranational and the total power of domestic actors for (1) the whole group of 40, (2) the three most important actors and (3) the most important actor. *Figure 3* not only shows that a shift of power to the supranational (i.e. above all European) level heavily depends on the policy-domain: as expected, it is most important for the constitutional issue of EU-integration and least important for immigration. Agriculture is situated in between the two. Even more interestingly, the shift of power is more important for the key actors than for the domain-specific elites as a whole. Considering the elites as a whole, European and supranational actors are no more powerful than their domestic colleagues in EU-integration. In agriculture and immigration, the domestic elites remain even more powerful than the European ones. Considering only the key actors, however, supranational actors are up to four times more powerful than domestic ones. This result provides an important qualification of our general hypothesis: the shift of power to the EU-level is most

pronounced at the top, while the balance of power remains more equilibrated, if we consider the domain-specific power structures as a whole.

< Figure 3 about here >

As far as the pattern of interaction between domestic and supranational actors is concerned, the density of cooperation between domestic actors and supranational actors is generally higher in EU-member states than in Switzerland.

### ***The impact of the domestic and policy-specific context on power structures***

For the analysis of the domestic power structure, we only take into consideration the set of organizations interviewed in the study. We proceed in several steps. First, we take a look at the overall situation with regard to the concentration of power and the degree of cooperation in a given country. The former is measured by the *standard deviation* of the distribution of power – with a high standard deviation indicating a high degree of fragmentation, and a low standard deviation indicating a high degree of concentration of power. We distinguish between a low, average and high degree of concentration. Cooperation, in turn, is measured by the *density of the cooperative relations* among the set of domestic organizations. We distinguish again between three levels of cooperation. The relevant indicators can be found in Tables A1 and A2 on the web page of the first author under the link to this paper. *Figure 4a* shows the empirical classification of the countries using the combination of the country-specific overall means for the two indicators – irrespective of the policy domains.

< Figure 4 about here >

Comparing this classification with the expected typology in *Figure 2*, the overall empirical pattern corresponds to a large extent to the expected one. However, we note three minor deviations and a more important one. The minor deviations concern the EU, the Netherlands and Spain, while the major one refers to the UK. The latter turns out to be much less concentrated than expected: although it constitutes Lijphart's paradigmatic case for a majoritarian democracy, its policy networks have a fragmented character which actually resembles the characteristics of Swiss networks, the paradigmatic case of a consensus democracy!

Secondly, we consider differences between the policy domains with regard to cooperative relationships and concentration. It turns out that the country-specific level of cooperation varies considerably from one policy domain to the other (see *Figure 4b*). Except for Italy, cooperation is generally relatively intense in immigration, but below average in the other two policy domains. In the UK, the level of cooperation varies most from one domain to the other. In the UK, cooperation is exceptionally high in immigration, which explains why, on average, the UK has an above average level of cooperation. By contrast, with regard to European integration and agriculture, the level of cooperation in the UK is far below average, which is just as unexpected as the highly decentralized character of its policy networks. In Spain, the domain-specific variation concerns the degree of cooperation as well as that of concentration. Spain's overall average situation is a result of quite diverse characteristics of the three policy networks: the immigration network is both highly cooperative and little concentrated, whereas the European integration network is little cooperative and little concentrated and the agricultural network somewhat cooperative and highly concentrated.

Thirdly, we include conflict and ambivalent relations in the analysis. It is possible that a policy network is characterized by both a high degree of cooperation and a high degree of conflict. Such a combination arises when there are internally highly integrated coalitions



which oppose each other, or when there are many ambivalent relationships, i.e. cooperative relations with other actors with whom one also has major disagreements. The first of these two conditions refers to the pattern we have called “conflict”, the second to “bargaining”. It is important to understand that even in a consensus democracy, a policy network may be characterized by conflict or bargaining. If the corresponding subsystem is in a critical phase, we expect conflict to be high, independently of the macro-political context. Conversely, in a majoritarian democracy, a subsystem may be in an equilibrium phase and the pattern of interactions may be essentially cooperative. *Figure 5* shows the density ratios for the relative importance of conflict and bargaining relations as compared to cooperative relations. A value of 0.5, for example, indicates that conflictual relations reach 50% of the density of cooperative ones. For the final classification of the networks based on these density ratios, we shall adopt the following definitions: where ratios for conflict take on intermediate values (between .3 and .5) and those for bargaining are roughly equally prominent, we attribute the network to the bargaining category. Where conflict ratios are equal to or greater than .5, we refer the network to the conflict category.

< Figure 5 about here >

As expected, European integration and immigration tend to be more conflictual than agriculture. However, in each policy-domain, there are large variations in the level of conflict and bargaining from one country to the other. In European integration, the situation is either conflictual or cooperative, while bargaining turns out to be rare. The Swiss network in this domain is the most conflictual of all. We also find a conflictual network for EU-integration in the UK. This result is not very surprising, given the widespread Euroscepticism in these two countries (see Kriesi 2005). More unexpected is the relatively high level of conflict in the

German EU-integration network. In the other countries – the Netherlands, France and Spain – the EU-integration policy networks are neither characterized by bargaining nor by conflict. Given our definitions, we consider them as examples of cooperation. In agriculture, bargaining predominates. Only in Italy and at the EU-level, the agricultural domain is characterized by a pattern of conflict, while cooperation is characteristic of the agricultural domain in the UK. In immigration, the networks are mainly conflictual with the Dutch, British and EU networks constituting the exceptions here.

*Figure 4c* adds the information about conflict and bargaining patterns presented in *Figure 5* to the information presented in *Figure 4b*. The combined information allows us to characterize the policy-specific networks in terms of our theoretical typology in *Figure 1*. The resulting typology is quite different from the overall situation in *Figure 4a*: In European integration, we find a situation of challenge (in Switzerland and the UK) or dominance (in Germany), on the one hand, and one of cooperation (in France, the Netherlands and Spain) on the other. In agriculture, we find even more variation from one country to the other: In Italy and at the EU-level, the agricultural network is in a state of dominance. In Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland, there is symmetrical and in Spain asymmetrical bargaining, while cooperation prevails in the UK. In immigration, the situation is most critical in Germany and Spain (challenge) and also quite challenging in Switzerland, France, and Italy. In the Netherlands, the immigration network is rather characterized by symmetrical bargaining and in the UK and at the EU-level, the relations are, according to our operationalizations, mainly cooperative.

### ***Composition of coalitions***

We finally turn to the composition of the domestic coalitions in a given policy network, i.e. we introduce the results of the block-model analyses. Based on such analyses, we distinguish

between four blocks in each network. Each one of these blocks refers to a coalition or to a satellite of a coalition (in case of a zero-block, i.e. an internally unconnected block).

Surprisingly, the partitioning of the networks based on this procedure results in blocks which are relatively homogenous with regard to the type of actors. This is shown in *Table 1*.

Independently of the policy domain or the country, the first block is typically dominated by state actors and it is also typically the most powerful block. Roughly two-thirds of the actors in the first block are state actors, and their average power is almost twice as high as that of the next two blocks. The second block is dominated by parties, but it also includes an important share of state actors. The remaining two blocks are typically composed of interest groups and SMO-NGO's – with the former dominating the third block and the latter dominating the fourth block.

< Table 1 about here >

We have calculated the average power of the actors for each block and constructed a complex image matrix for each block-model. Tables A3 and A4 that can be found on the first author's web page contain the relevant information. Image matrices have the advantage that they can be represented by simple graphs. *Figure 6* presents such a graph for the example of EU-integration. This graph contains the image matrix for all the countries with sufficient information in the corresponding domain. The blocks are represented by circles, the ties by arrows. The blocks are numbered and the text below the image matrices provides a rough indication of the composition of the corresponding blocks. The circles are shaded according to the power of the block. Very powerful blocks (mean power  $>.60$ ) are dark, moderately powerful blocks are grey ( $.30 < \text{mean power} < .60$ ), and weak blocks are white (mean power  $<.30$ ). The arrows refer to the type of tie: bold arrows indicate cooperation, normal arrows

bargaining, interrupted ones conflict. The absence of an arrow indicates that there is no relationship whatsoever between two blocks. Note that the first two blocks and the last two blocks were only split in the second step of the block-model procedure. This means that the first couple of blocks and the second couple of blocks are generally more similar than blocks from different couples. Analogous figures can be constructed for the other two policy domains. For lack of space, we illustrate the results for EU-integration only.

< Figures 6 about here >

There are two possible types of conflict that shape the policy field of EU integration. The first type of conflict is a fundamental one and refers to the question of whether a nation should join or remain within the European Union. The second type of conflict deals with the way European integration should proceed. Here the debates center around a supranational vs. intergovernmental or a liberal versus social Europe. In Switzerland and the UK, the conflicts are of the fundamental type. Its relationship with the European and global context has become the key political cleavage in the non EU-member state Switzerland over the past decade (Kriesi et al. 2005). For the UK, the EU integration process is still a heavily disputed project as illustrated by the widespread rejection of and mobilization against the common currency, the Euro. The struggle might have been domesticated in the last years as Blair is said to have a more positive stance towards Europe than the former governments (Armstrong and Bulmer 2003: 389). By contrast, in the countries where cooperative structures prevail – Spain, France and the Netherlands (see *Figure 4c*) – the conflicting relations refer to the way how integration should proceed. Germany is a special case to which we come back in a moment.

The block models of the domestic power structures in *Figure 6* reveal these conflict constellations. In those countries with fundamental conflicts (Switzerland and the UK) there is a pro-EU coalition – in Switzerland it is composed of the integration establishment and the pro-EU left, in the UK of the state actors and the Labor party<sup>2</sup>. The anti-EU coalition in Switzerland is dominated by the SVP, the “Schweizerische Volkspartei”, who is the single most powerful actor in the field of EU integration in Switzerland. In the UK, the opposition parties – internally divided – are the main sources of critique and also of opposition towards the integration process. Business interest associations emerge as a third important block in both countries. In Switzerland they serve as brokers despite being divided by major internal disagreements: they cooperate with the integration establishment, reject the pro EU-left (including the unions) and bargain with those not willing to join the EU at all. In the UK business interest associations (including the unions and the Confederation of British Industry) cooperate with the state actors and the Labor party, while having disagreements with all other blocks. In both countries, power is shared between the pro- and anti-EU coalitions. Block four in Switzerland and block two in the UK, which are composed of the major EU opponents, have as much power as the traditional integration establishment.

Surprisingly, the interactions between German actors prove to be dominated by conflicts regarding the EU integration project (see *Figure 4c*), too. Germany is normally characterized by a strong elite consensus on the integration project in support of the development of a European Constitution. For the main part of the German elite, the EU is an extension of their national constitutional system that does not lead to fundamental problems of legitimacy (Jachtenfuchs 2002: 283). A more detailed analysis of the German conflict constellation reveals that 75 percent of all conflictual relations originate from four out of the sixteen interviewed actors, namely the “Euromärsche”<sup>3</sup>, the unions, both part of block two, and the conservative and liberal opposition parties, both part of block one. Critique thus originates primarily from the left movements and from the opposition parties.

In fact, with its conflict centered on left movements, Germany resembles Spain and France. In all three countries, there is domestic conflict about the *form* of EU integration, which lacks the fundamental character symbolized in the existence of pro- and anti-EU coalitions. As *Figure 4c* shows, the degree of this domestic conflict is higher in Germany, followed by Spain and by France<sup>4</sup>. The latter two have been rated as cooperative. The main conflict line regarding the process of EU integration in these three countries refers to the question of a liberal versus social Europe. In all three countries – as the block model reveals – the unions and left NGOs constitute the focal point of conflict. As the distribution of power reveals, the left challengers are powerful actors in Spain, whereas in France they lack any substantial influence. In Germany, block two is not powerful as a whole, but it includes one powerful actor: the German union federation (DGB). In all three countries, the integration establishment is able to concentrate power, whereas in the UK and Switzerland – the countries characterized by a fundamental conflict - it has to share it with the anti-EU coalition. In the Netherlands a cooperative climate dominates. In this case the dominant conflict line cannot, however, easily be deduced from the block model.

## **Conclusion**

In the present paper we have developed a typology of power structures in policy subsystems that is based on two key dimensions: the distribution of power and the predominant type of interaction in the policy network. The question of what kind of actors hold power has been introduced as a subsidiary aspect qualifying the first dimension. Combining these two main dimensions allowed us to describe six types of power structures. We argued that these power structures depend on the macro-political context, i.e. the European, domestic and policy-specific context into which the relevant actors are embedded. To test the impact of these determinants, we have conducted reputational and network analyses. They reveal that the

*European context* heavily influences the policy-specific power structure. In Switzerland, the only non-EU member we studied, power remains almost exclusively nationally focused, while the shift of decision-making competences to the European level influences the power structures and interactions in EU-member states. The shift of power to the EU level is most far-reaching in the case of constitutional issues of EU integration and smallest for immigration policy, with agriculture taking an intermediary position. Interestingly, the shift of power to the supranational level is much more substantial with respect to the key actors than with regard to the domain-specific elites as a whole. This result points to the development of what we could call an “asymmetrical multi-level governance structure” – asymmetrical in the sense that supranational actors, indeed, become *the* most important policy-specific actors; a situation that relativizes the idea of a presumably *balanced* power sharing between the levels.

Our hypotheses regarding the influence of the *domestic and policy-specific* contexts on the power structures have only partially been confirmed. On the one hand, regarding the overall domestic context of formal concentration of power and informal cooperation, our expectations have generally held up, with only one major exception: British policy networks turned out to be quite fragmented, resembling more closely those expected for consensus than for majoritarian democracies. On the other hand, a closer look at the differences between policy domains – within and between countries – shows the limitations of general country characteristics for explaining variations in power structures: country-specific configurations vary considerably from one policy domain to the other. Similarly, the analysis also showed the limitations of policy characteristics as an explanatory factor: power configurations vary from one country to the other in the same policy subsystem. We conclude that we need to take into account the complex interactions of country- and policy-specific elements in order to explain power configurations in a country-specific policy network. This implies that future research should no longer aim at national-level generalizations about power configurations

and policy processes, but needs to understand the combined impact of the country- and policy-specific contexts. Scholars need to develop more detailed hypotheses about how issue-specific contexts vary from one country to the other and how such variations influence power configurations.

The empirical test of such hypotheses requires a broad comparative research design, which allows for systematic variations of the context conditions. Based on our experience, we are aware of the limits and the difficulties of such a design. Most importantly, our study only provides a cross-sectional snapshot of the structural preconditions of policy-making. Ideally, the perspective developed here should be applied to the longitudinal study of policy-networks. In addition, our experience indicates that the implementation of such a design is very demanding and presupposes the coordinated effort of country-specific teams. In spite of our concerted effort, the quality of the data still varies from one policy subsystem to the other, which implies that some of the subsystem-specific differences might be due to different implementations of the common design. Moreover, the number of organizations interviewed per network should have been larger in order to guarantee a more comprehensive view of each network. Finally, the empirical classifications are based on some rough and ready decisions concerning cutting points. They should be taken with a grain of salt and, ideally, should serve as a guide to more in-depth analyses of the policy debates in the specific networks. These limits notwithstanding, we are convinced that the comparative approach adopted here holds out considerable promise for a more integrated analysis of the impact of country and issue-specific contexts on policy-making. We believe that it will be most useful for the systematic study of policy change when applied longitudinally and when complemented by an in-depth analysis of the policy debates in the specific networks.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> We made use of UCINET 6 (Borgatti, S.P., Everett, M.G. and Freeman, L.C. 2002. Ucinet for Windows: Software for Social Network Analysis. Harvard: Analytic Technologies) for this analysis.

<sup>2</sup> Wallace (2000b:2) claims that the UK has turned from a „regime-taker“ to a „regime-maker“ in some areas in the field of EU integration under the Blair government.

<sup>3</sup> Euromärsche claims to have conflicts with all other 15 interviewed actors. This biases the results and leads to an overestimation regarding the degree of conflict in Germany.

<sup>4</sup> The lack of conflict in France regarding EU integration is a result of the fact that the actors who have taken up the debate on EU integration, namely the party actors, were not interviewed. France is one of those few countries where EU integration has substantially altered the party landscape. There are communist, socialist, conservative and right-wing extreme EU adversaries. Part of these (new) parties are founded as split-offs of the traditional parties. But even within the main parties in France EU integration is one of the strongly debated issues (Goulard 2002), that has polarised the nation and shadowed French EU politics (Ziebur 2003: 305).

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Figure 1: Typology of power structures

<b>Type of interaction</b> <b>Distribution of power</b>	Conflict	Bargaining	Co-operation
Fragmentation	Challenge	Symmetric bargaining	Cooperation
Concentration	Dominance	Asymmetric bargaining	Cooperation

Figure 2: Typology of country-specific political opportunity structures

<b>informal Cooperation</b> <b>formal Concentration</b>	low	medium	high
low		EU	CH, D
medium	I	E	NL
high	F		UK

Figure 3  
Europeanization of power distribution in the member countries, by issue: ratios of index values

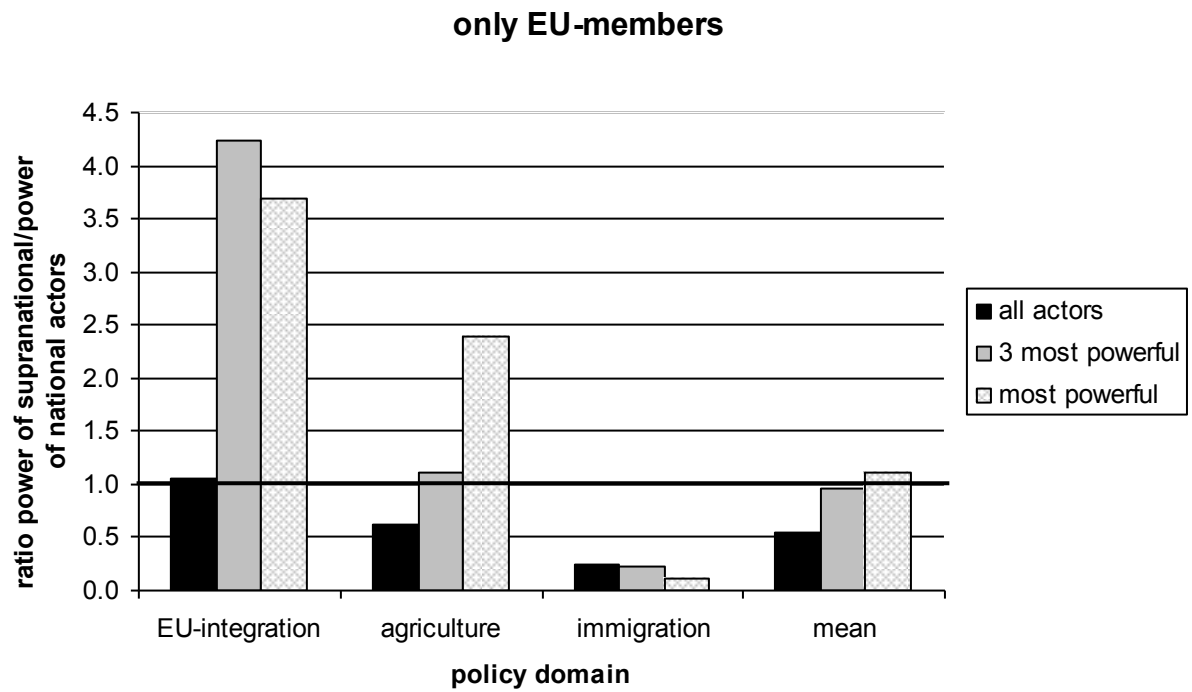




Figure 4

Typology of country-specific political opportunity structures: empirical test

## a) overall (cooperation)

Concentration	Degree of cooperation		
	low	medium	high
low		E, NL	CH, D, UK
medium	I	EU	
high	F		

## b) domain-specific (cooperation)

Concentration	Degree of cooperation		
	low	medium	high
Low	NL(a),UK(a,e), E(e)		CH(a,e),D(a,i),E(i), UK(i)
Medium	F(e),I(i),EU(a)	NL(e)	CH(i),D(e),F(i), NL(i),EU(i)
High	I(a)	E(a)	

A = Agriculture; E = European Integration, I = Immigration

## c) domain-specific (conflict, bargaining, cooperation)

Concentration	conflict	bargaining	cooperation
Low	CH(e),UK(e), D(i), E(i)	CH(a),D(a),NL(a)	UK(a,i), E(e)
Medium	CH(i),D(e),F(i), I(i),EU(a)	NL(i)	F(e),NL(e), EU(i)
High	I(a)	E(a)	

A = Agriculture; E = European Integration, I = Immigration

Figure 5

Ratios of conflict/cooperation and bargaining/cooperation relations by country and policy domain

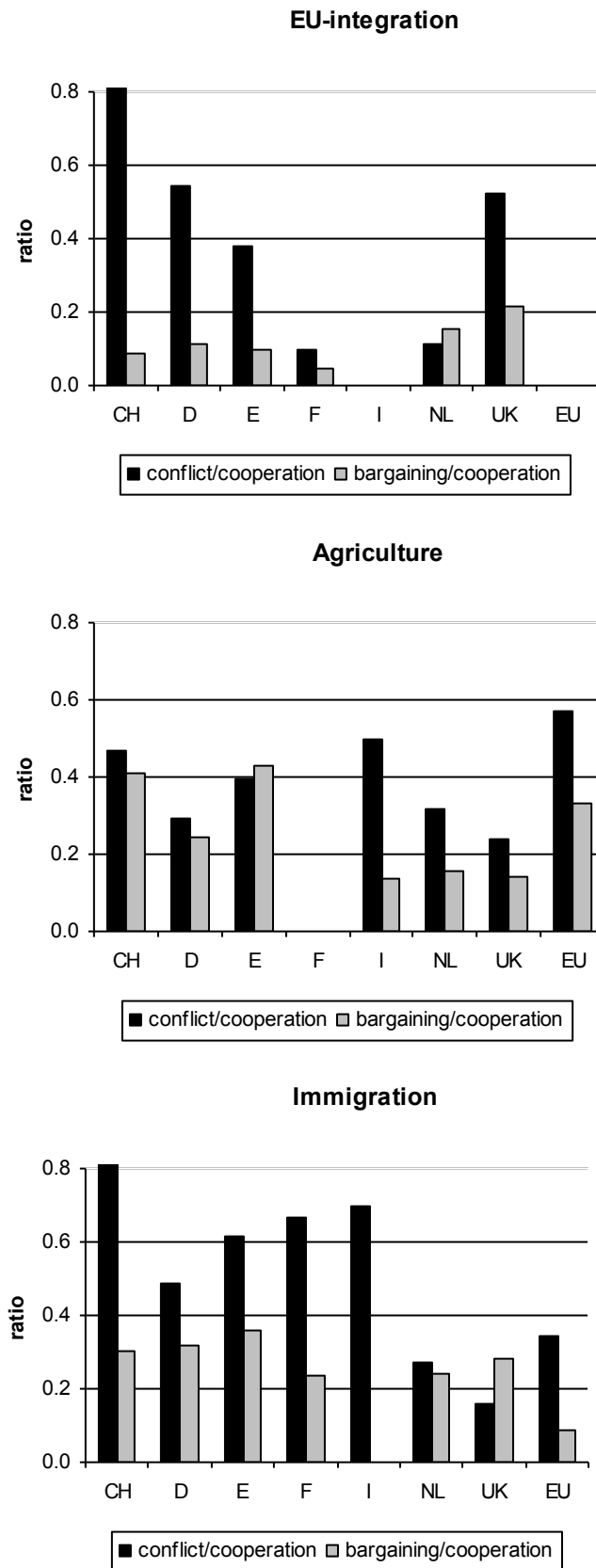


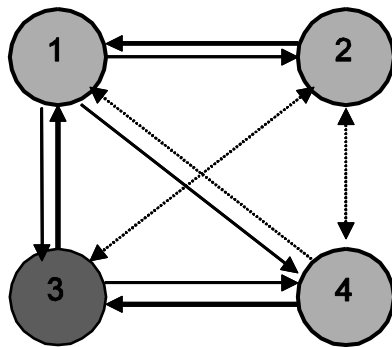
Table 1

Characteristics of block types: average power and composition (percentages)<sup>1)</sup>

Block type	power	state	party	ig	ngo	total	N
1 „State-block“	<b>0.65</b>	<b>67.4</b>	13.5	18.0	1.1	100.0	84
2 „Party block“	0.34	<b>20.3</b>	<b>55.4</b>	17.6	6.8	100.0	74
3 „Interest-group block“	0.35	14.1	11.8	<b>42.4</b>	<b>27.0</b>	100.0	81
4 „SMO-block“	0.27	1.1	6.8	<b>31.8</b>	<b>60.7</b>	100.0	80
All blocks	0.41	26.7	21.1	26.4	25.8	100.0	319

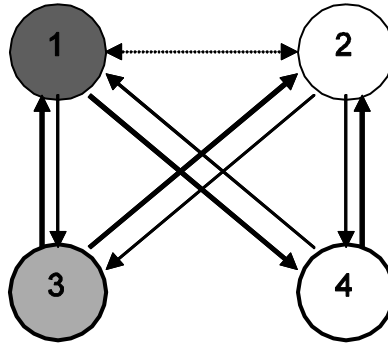
<sup>1)</sup> averages taken across all issues and countries

Figure 6  
EU-Integration  
Switzerland



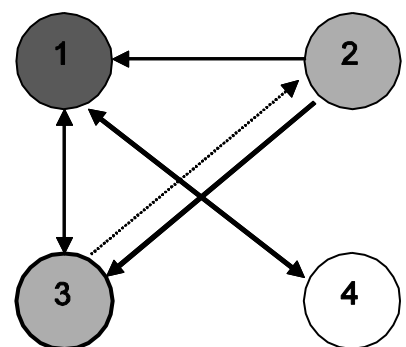
1 integration establishment  
2 pro-EU left  
3 business interest assoc.  
4 anti-EU right

Germany



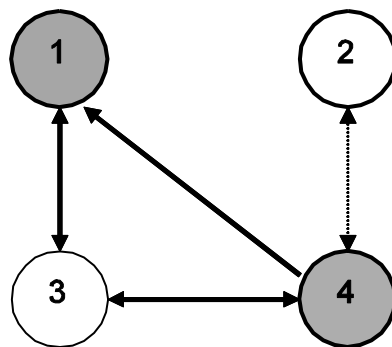
1 state actors + right  
2 unions + attac  
3 left +  
4 pro-EU NGOs

Spain



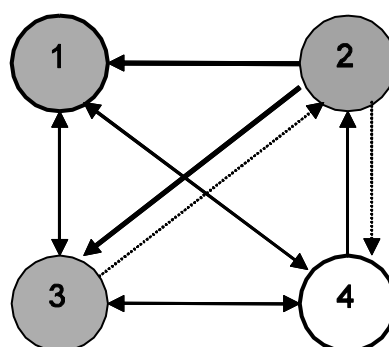
1 state actors + employers  
2 parties  
3 Unions + NGOs  
4 Think tanks +

France



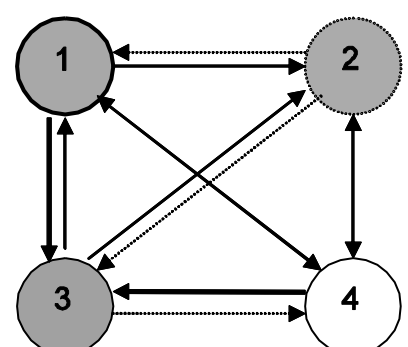
1 state actors  
2 union  
3 state actors + social SMOs  
4 pro-EU NGOs + employers

Netherlands



1 conservatives + unions  
2 parties + BIAs  
3 state actor + pro-EU NGOs  
4 think tanks

UK



1 state actors + labor  
2 opposition parties  
3 think tanks + BIAs  
4 weak pro/anti-EU NGOs

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